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ABSTRACT

To answer the need for more black teachers and administrators in institutions of higher education, Federal City College (FCC) and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI & SU) planned and implemented a cooperative program to provide advanced graduate training to faculty and staff at FCC leading to the Doctor of Education degree. The program enabled faculty and staff unable to take a leave of absence to maintain their present position while participating in the program. Although each participant's plan of studies was individualized, certain elements of the program were shared: (1) a professional core of seminars and laboratory studies in higher education; (2) a series of institutes, tutorials, conferences, externships, and discussions with outside experts, agency heads, and other personnel; and (3) formal training in doctoral-level research and evaluation activities, including the design and outline of a dissertation. As a basis for designing the individual plans of study and research, each participant was required to pass a qualifying examination early in the program. Upon successful completion of the individual plan of study, exclusive of the dissertation, some students elected to receive a certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies and terminated their participation at that point. The program was termed a success by both the participants from FCC and the VPI & SU staff. (MM)

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THE EXTERNAL COOPERATIVE DOCTORAL STUDIES PROGRAM: A MODEL FOR REDUCING THE SHORTAGE OF BLACK HIGHER EDUCATION & FACULTY & ADMINISTRATORS WITH EARNED DOCTORATES.

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Introduction

A great deal of interest in the field of education has been generated in recent years over efforts to assist developing institutions in the upgrading of personnel especially predominately Black institutes. Even the Federal Government has a large program designed to provide assistance to these institutions to train faculty and leaders. Surveys of predominately Black institutions indicate that academic and non-academic administrators are typically selected from the ranks of teacher-scholars due to the shortage of specifically trained personnel. Prior to appointment most of these administrators have had little, if any, exposure to systematic training or knowledge of total university operations. In addition, they are generally forced to learn their new roles "on the job." Some administrators in this position encounter difficulty in withdrawing themselves from the philosophies and basic viewpoints of specific disciplines and in acquiring the ability to understand and respond to the broader concerns of a department, school, or the university as a whole. This difficulty is also experienced by faculty who are promoted within their teaching positions. Both the administrator and faculty member often face an additional obstacle of completing the terminal degree concurrently with performing their jobs.

In recognition of the above problems and in an attempt to address them, a cooperative program of doctoral studies was initiated between Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Federal City College in Washington, D. C. to provide advanced graduate training to faculty and staff at FCC.

Program Mechanics

At the request of the School of Education of Federal City College, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in cooperation with

Federal City College staff members planned and designed a doctoral program leading to the Doctor of Education degree for twenty-two selected Federal City College faculty and staff members for a thirty month period beginning in January 1973. The program was specifically designed to provide an opportunity for advanced study to faculty and staff at the Federal City College who, under normal circumstances, would not have been able to take a leave of absence to complete traditional requirements for the terminal degree.

The Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University is authorized to offer the doctorate and related graduate studies in most areas of professional education; however, the Cooperative Doctoral Studies Program was concentrated initially in the areas of most relevance to the Federal City College, namely adult/continuing education and post-secondary administration and supervision, including research, planning, and evaluation. The program provided for formal instruction, tutorials, internships, externships, independent study and doctoral research and advisement at Virginia Tech's extension sites at Dulles International Airport, the Reston Center in Northern Virginia, the University's Blacksburg campus, and at the Federal City College campus in Washington, D. C.

Program Mechanics

In the Cooperative Doctoral Studies Program qualified candidates from the Federal City College staff enrolled in a special 90-96 credit post-master's degree or equivalent and met Virginia Tech's eligibility requirements for the doctoral degree program - minimum of 3.3 grade point average in a 45-credit master's degree program, or its equivalent, appropriate recommendations by superiors plus consent of the College of Education faculty. Once enrolled

in the program, each participant continued through thirty months of continuous enrollment or until the doctoral program was successfully completed. In the spring of 1975 four participants had completed all requirements and received degrees at the June commencement. Four additional participants completed requirements for the degree by August of the same year. Six participants were phased out of the program for personal reasons by the end of twenty months. It is expected that if the progress of the remainder of the group continues at the present rate, they will graduate during the 1975-76 academic year.

In order to support a full-time study program of nine credit hours per quarter in the Cooperative Doctoral Studies Program, participants limited their professional duties during each term of the thirty months period to a maximum of six didatic hours or its equivalent.

Program Content and Method

Each participant's plan of studies was individualized within the general, but flexible, doctoral program guidelines established by Virginia Tech for the Doctor of Education degree. Certain elements of the program, however, were shared by some or all participants. These included:

1. A professional core of seminars and laboratory studies in higher education;
2. A series of intensive institutes, tutorials, conferences, externships, and discussions with outside experts, agency heads, and other personnel who contributed to the advanced preparation of the staff;
3. Formal training in doctoral-level research and evaluation activities, including the design of research and outline of dissertation.

Formal study in related cognate areas at Virginia Tech or at other institutions was permissable as credit for degree purposes within the limits established by graduate school policy. Approximately eighteen (18) quarter hours beyond the master's degree were acceptable for transfer of credits.

Program Development

For its doctoral programs, Virginia Tech requires successful completion of a minimum of 135 quarter hours of advanced study and research beyond the bachelor's degree. Each student's individual plan of study, however, was developed with a doctoral advisory committee. Additional study beyond the minimum was assigned, where necessary. Typically, a qualified student engaged in 90-99 credits of study beyond the master's degree. The individual's plan of study normally included four constituent parts. They were:

1. A core of professional studies in higher education, (12-18 credits).
2. An area of concentration within the general field of higher education, including relevant cognate studies, (21-36 credits).
3. Preparation in area of research and evaluation, (12-18 credits).
4. Dissertation, (30-45 credits).

Several program design and development workshops were conducted in which the faculty group and participants identified and wrote specific program objectives, including common objectives for individual plans of study.

Within the broad program parameters, an advanced graduate faculty group designed, developed, and conducted the doctoral program in detail. Approximately six regular senior Virginia Tech faculty members in administration, supervision, research, adult/continuing education, post-secondary education, business, urban affairs, and related descriptives were assigned to the program on a continuing basis. They were joined from time to time in their

deliverations by two or three doctoral-level faculty members from Federal City College in order to assure an appropriate urban relevance and emphasis to the program as it was developed in detail.

In addition to assigned Virginia Tech graduate faculty, an instructional pool of experts and specialists in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C., area was also established, thereby taking maximum advantage of the relatively unlimited doctoral-level instructional and research resources, both governmental and non-governmental, found in the District of Columbia.

As a specific basis for designing individual plans of study and research, each participant was required to successfully complete a qualifying examination early in the program. This normally occurs in the student's second term of study after 12-18 credits. Upon successful completion of the individual's plan of studies, exclusive of dissertation, certain students elected to receive a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies and terminated their studies at that point. Admittance to candidacy in the doctoral program was based on acceptance of the student's design of research and outline of dissertation. Each participant elects a doctoral advisory committee, the chairman of which normally serves also as the candidate's dissertation director. Normally, no one faculty member chaired more than three of four such individual doctoral committees. Virginia Tech faculty chaired each individual doctoral advisory committee and constituted a majority of its membership as well. In individual cases, a distinguished specialist from the Washington, D.C., area joined the doctoral committee in developing an individual plan of study or research.

Residence

Although all participants spent some time on Virginia Tech's Blacksburg

campus as part of a planned program of activities, it was intended that full-time doctoral study proceed under campus faculty supervision in Northern Virginia and the Metropolitan Washington area, utilizing whenever desirable the instructional, library, and research facilities of Federal City College, United States Office of Education, and other educative and governmental agencies, area universities, and the Library of Congress. Virginia Tech's University Council specifically exempted the participants in this program from the University's on-campus residence requirements with the stipulation that participants maintain reduced work loads during the program period that enabled them to devote themselves to full-time doctoral study and research.

Faculty & Student Reaction

There is no question about the positive effects a doctoral program has upon the growth of an institution and its faculty. It is usually a supposition that doctoral students are at the apex of the educational ladder and because of that fact there are built-in rewards for faculty members working with such students. Anyone who has worked with doctoral students can indeed attest to the authenticity of this statement. This same system of reward worked in the Cooperative Doctoral Program at Federal City College, but the program required much more of the faculty members than the usual campus based dissertation advisement program. This project required the faculty members to advise students via the phone and mail and, in addition, to travel to the students on the FCC campus every month to complete the advisement work. This, was, indeed, unusual and demanding upon the faculty; however, there were rewards in addition to the normal rewards associated with directing doctoral dissertations.

In the first place there was the indentification with urban students and an urban institution. Many of the faculty working in this project had the typical middle class suburban/rural background and worked in an institution that has a basic rural orientation. The juxtaposition of this background and job orientation with the urban scene provided the faculty member with a growth situation. Some faculty members who had never worked with students who were born and raised in an urban environment expressed a feeling that it was a new and profitable experience for them--at least their experiences with diverse groups had been expanded.

Secondly, almost all of the participants were black. Again many of the faculty with their traditional orientation had not worked closely on the doctoral level with black students. All faculty members expressed a feeling that working with black doctoral students was stimulating and, in turn, expanded their experiential level. As a result, this experience undoubtedly helped change the orientation of faculty members and in turn this segment of the university.

Another reward, as reported by the faculty group involved in the project, dealt with the cooperative effort of a faculty group coming from two geographical areas. Faculty members from both the Blacksburg Campus and the Northern Virginia--Reston Extension base were involved in the project. By cooperating on doctoral advisory committees, the faculty members individually were able to learn how their colleagues worked intellectually and professionally. In another setting this might not be considered a rewarding experience, but for the Virginia Tech faculty there was the distinct advantage of being permitted to work cooperatively with a different segment of the faculty separated by geographic distance.

There was also another reward, at least for some people, that was in operation in this project--that of being associated with and working in an

innovative program. This is a reward for most people and perhaps the same Hawthorne effect that is in operation in all innovative projects was in operation in the Cooperative Doctoral Program. Each faculty member did work diligently on the project and because of the unique nature of the program, probably did more than what would normally have been expected of them to make it a success.

The obvious reward available to students was attainment of the doctoral degree, but there were some distinct advantages for students associated with this project. Perhaps the most attractive feature of the program was the opportunity to maintain employment while pursuing the terminal degree. All students were able to remain in their current positions on a reduced work-load basis and to participate in the project. The trade-off of half-time reduced workload and normal residency was the difference in most cases of students being able to complete the degree requirements.

The students were also able to participate in a degree program designed to allow maximum individualization in program construction. In spite of the fact the FCC faculty and staff participating in the project were in a group project, each participant was able to individually design his/her program content to match whatever professional goal they had. Of course, all doctoral degree programs at Virginia Tech are highly individualized in terms of content. On a campus based program, individualization of content was achieved in this project through a combination of efforts. Participants could transfer up to 18 quarter hours of credit beyond the Master's Degree into the Cooperative Doctoral Program. Thus, a student in one of the many institutions of higher education in the D.C area could take classes in specific subject matter, and transfer this credit into their program. The most effective manner in which individualization of content was achieved was through

specially organized classes, workshops, and seminars designed to meet various needs of participants in the project. Further, the students in this project were able to enroll in independent studies, internships, externships, and field studies all designed to meet individual needs.

Another distinct advantage of this program was the amount of student input into the planning of the entire project. Although the contractural arrangements were between two institutions, the planning of the program mechanics was within the purview of the students participating in this project. The programs for all of the externships and the majority of the workshops were entirely planned by the students. Much of the work of planning the monthly operation of the project was done in planning workshops composed of faculty and students. Consequently, not only program content, but also program mechanics were cooperatively planned by student and faculty. The planning workshop was held on a monthly basis to keep all participants current on the project and to deal also with unique planning problems that surfaced as the project progressed.

A unique feature to the student planning phase of the project was the preliminary review of the dissertation topic. All students were required to present their dissertation topics in prospectus form to the planning group composed of faculty members and students. The topics were discussed and critiqued in such a manner to enable the presenter to sharpen and focus the topic. From this experience the student was then able to rapidly develop the topic for presentation to the Doctoral Advisory Committee. Through the technique of the group preliminary review of dissertation topics, all students gained the experience of critiquing a proposal. Of equal importance is the fact that the students had an input into the types and quality of dissertations to be produced by the FCC project.

Another distinct advantage of this program for participants was that the students were able to utilize the educational resources of both institutions in separate locations--Virginia Tech main campus in Blacksburg, Northern Virginia--Reston Extension Base, as well as Federal City College in Washington D.C. Of course, the entire resources of a large urban area were available to the students and the most extensive library in the nation, the Library of Congress, was an invaluable resource for the students.

Since the majority of students live and/or work in Washington, dissertations problems were easily obtainable and research could be conducted in the area where the results could be, in most cases, of immediate use. For instance, several students selected research problems which dealt specifically with various aspects of the operation of Federal City College and its program, whereas other students chose topics related to Federal government programs in education.

Like any other innovative program in education, there are identifiable advantages and there are also disadvantages. The most obvious disadvantage was the distance in terms of geography and time between faculty and student. Although Washington D.C. is only 250 miles from the Blacksburg Campus, this geographical distance did, at times, become a disadvantage. In addition to the geographical distance, there was a time distance. The professorial staff traveled to D.C. every month for a two day period to meet with students. In many cases individual professors who had reason to be in the Washington D.C. area working on another project made additional contacts with students to advise them on their dissertation. While on the monthly trip for the project, the professorial staff spent the entire time working individually with students. These sessions were indeed productive because of the length of time a student could work with his/her dissertation advisor, but there were times

when students needed a question answered between these monthly sessions. With a campus based program, dissertation students are able to drop by the office of their advisor almost at will and have a question answered, and even extended advisement sessions can be arranged within a short space of time--unless the advisor is a senior professor with extended off-campus contacts and commitments. Although it is doubtful that campus dissertation students spend any more time in the aggregate with their advisor than the FCC students did, the frequency of the contact is probably the main difference. Of course, frequency of contact is very crucial in the developing stages of a dissertation topic and again in the final stages of the writing. The plan of operation for the FCC visitations by the Virginia Tech faculty called for bi-monthly visits during the conception stage of the dissertation to meet the demand of frequent student/professor contact to develop a dissertation proposal. Even with this degree of frequency, there were occasions when this number of contacts was not enough.

Because of the time distance and the unique nature of the number of student/advisor contacts, a student had to be highly motivated to succeed. The student received direction from his advisor at the monthly or at the bi-monthly meeting and then had to proceed on his/her own initiative until the next contact, and in some cases this could be a month away. With such an arrangement the less motivated student was apt to let his/her schedule of writing slip in terms of fulfillment because of the time distance. In other words, those students who were highly motivated and self-directed were the ones who succeeded in the dissertation stages of this project. These students probably were not too unlike students in any other doctoral program, but those who were successful in this project were the ones who showed a great deal of self-direction in writing a dissertation.

Summary

In an attempt to meet a need of more black teachers and administrators in higher education institutions, Federal City College and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University planned and implemented a cooperative doctoral program in a manner by which the campus was brought to the student. This program enabled the student to remain at his work while participating in a full accredited doctoral program conducted by a state supported institution. The rich, cultural and educational environment of the nation's capital was the scene of this program and provided the resources necessary for the research portion of the program.

The program was termed a success by both the participants and the VPI & SU staff by several measures. The quality of research was judged equal to that done on the University campus. The attrition rate of students dropping from the program was no higher than any other group in the university. The exit interviews conducted of each graduate of the university provided further data by which to evaluate the program. The graduates of this program indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the program despite the obvious limitations of distance. Their satisfaction rate was equal to that expressed by all doctoral graduates of the Univesity. Informal surveys of the remaining students in this program collaborate the findings obtained through the exit interviews. Finally, the Virginia Tech faculty that participated in the project indicated, without exception, overall satisfaction with the program and the work of the participants. Further, all faculty indicated a desire to participate in a similar project with FCC now in the planning stage.

Although the number of students in the project and the subsequent graduates is not large when compared with the nationwide need for Black

teachers and administrators with terminal degrees, it does speak quite forcefully to a localized need of an urban college and in this manner might give impetus to other institutions of higher learning in their efforts to meet this still critical need.